

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:

Looking ahead to 2
a show back in &
the Maltings! 3
Pinafore!!

*Sing-Along-A- 4
Lockdown part III &
& other Online 5
Socials*

The Musical 6
Director's &
thoughts on *Love 7
in the (Open) Air*
Herald Review/
articles

Pictures and 8
download of &
sound recordings 9
for *Love is in the*
(Open) Air

Remembering 10
Phil Street &
11

Remembering 12
Brian Tonge &
13

Other FAOS news 14

Chairman's News

Welcome back everyone!

Well, its been a tumultuous year. We've had many downs, but we've also seen some lovely ups too.

It was amazing to finally get back to performing for an appreciative LIVE audience at Gostrey Meadow and the Farnham Maltings in July. To see the pure joy on the faces of not only the audience, but the performers also, was something I will treasure for a long time. It is strange the things you take for granted in this life, but to see little children scooch up to the front and be mesmerised by George Priestley's live puppet show for "*Kiss the Girl*" really drilled home just how much people have missed out on the basics of live entertainment over the last 18 months.

It was lovely to be able to meet up virtually during the lockdown, but nothing beats seeing people in the flesh and not having to keep saying "You're on mute"! Speaking of the virtual meet-ups, I would like to send a special mention of thanks to someone who's has been tireless in their efforts to ensure we were constantly doing things as a Group – be it virtual sing-a-longs or our fantastic concert. Mr Nigel Morley has been relentless in ensuring these things have happened and has put in so much effort. I cannot tell you the amount of emails and WhatsApp messages I've had from Nigel over the last 12-18 months (let alone those that I'm NOT copied into), some of which I even responded to before the reminder email! Without his determination to succeed in these ventures, we as a group would have struggled immensely to pull these events off so, from the bottom of my heart, thank you once more Nigel.

Obviously, none of these events were a one-person team. I must say thank you to Kevin Wright for his brilliant editing of the sing-a-long-lockdown videos and the incredible artwork he produced for both *Love Is In The (Open) Air* and the upcoming *Pinafore*.

David Tropman had several sleepless nights and worked extremely hard to ensure *LIITOA* went off without a hitch, particularly given it was our first venture into outdoor singing and the technical difficulties that brought him, not only as Production Manager, but also as the Group's Technical Manager.

Of course, where would we have been without the outstanding direction and musical direction of Heather Legat and Diana Vivian? To be able to rehearse in the most trying of conditions (bubbles of six, outdoor rehearsals in gardens, backing tracks etc.) shows just how adaptable this team really is and I look forward to seeing them again for *USS Pinafore*.

As I said earlier, it has not only been ups, but there have been some very sad times in the last year.



Chairman's News, continued...



In January this year, we lost our former chairman and a true legend of the Group, Phil Street. On 3rd January 2021, I received that fateful message informing me of Phil's passing. Needless to say, it is difficult to describe my feelings the time, but I think the only word that comes to mind is "numb". In memory of Phil, we held a virtual video night, showcasing one of his star performances of Judd Fry in FAOS's 2002 production of *Oklahoma!* Please see my section later in this issue of Barlines for more on Phil and the impact he had on the Group as a whole.

Phil's passing follows that of FAOS stalwart and Something For The Weekend Bass-Man, Brian Tonge. Brian passed away peacefully in his sleep on 10th August 2020. Brian had been involved in the Society from 1994, spending time on the Committee and even as Chairman of the Show Selection sub-committee. In later years, Brian was the bass performer for Something For The Weekend, the a cappella quartet formed of FAOS members Brian, Nigel Morley, Nick Lang and myself. For 10 years, we performed at gigs from weddings to funerals, birthdays and retirements. Every time, Brian would steal the show with his slow and purposeful comedy timings and brilliant deep booming voice. Brian leaves a large hole in all our hearts and our thoughts continue to be shared with his wife, Gill Tonge.

I am obviously aware that Covid-19 has affected all of our lives, both physically and mentally. Lockdowns have been a strain on everyone's well being. However, we can now see some light at the end of the tunnel. The theatres are open, with more opening soon. Live entertainment is making a comeback. This means we can finally get back to doing what we do best; rehearsing and performing together as part of the FAOS family.

In this vein, I am absolutely delighted to announce that rehearsals for *USS Pinafore* will begin on Monday 13th September 2021 (further details to be sent out in due course). The majority of already-cast actors have confirmed they will be taking up their cast roles, however I will leave it to Heather and Diana to announce how they plan on filling the remaining as-yet uncast roles, but it will be amazing to see as many members (new and old) as possible for our return to the theatre.

Please do remember, we are the FAOS family. If you need to talk to someone, do reach out. We are all here for each other.

I wish you all a very happy summer and look forward to welcoming you back to rehearsals in September.

WE ARE BACK!

Kevin Sampson, Chairman – FAOS Musical Theatre Group

USS Pinafore—boldly going after all!

Aboard the *USS Pinafore*, Farnham audiences will boldly go where no man has gone before ... to outer space. Captain Corcoran's ship has been fitted with photon torpedoes and his crew have their phasers set to stun.

The ship will seek out new life and new civilisations, equipped with all Sullivan's music and most of Gilbert's words, but in a brand-new version that is guaranteed to beam you up, far from earth. "It's live theatre, Captain, but not as we know it ...". The directorial team is Heather Legat and Diana Vivian, so expect classic G&S music and humour with an extra-terrestrial dimension!

REHEARSALS FOR PINAFORE ...

... begin at **7.30 on Monday 13 September in the Methodist Hall, South Street**. There are a couple of parts yet to be cast and there's still room in the chorus. For chorus – just turn up on the 13th. For auditions – please email secretary@faos.org.uk

Following their sensational Sister Act & Titanic,


FAOS
Musical Theatre Group
presents...

Gilbert & Sullivan's

U.S.S.

PINAFORE

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Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down, part III!

Following on from the successes of *Hail Poetry* and *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*, we weren't finished! Over the course of last summer we put together our most ambitious ***Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down*** instalment yet—*Food Glorious Food* from Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* Previously performed by FAOS MTG back in 2009.



Once again, we were fundraising and this time it was for the Maltings, after they had reached out to our community with an abundance of funded commissions and acts of support to people stuck in their homes during the difficulties of Covid.

If you would like to add to the support of the Maltings, our JustGiving page should still accept donations! You can also find out more information on all that the Maltings have done for our community.



Just click this link: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/faosmaltings>

Once again, many thanks to Nigel Morley for coordinating!

Most importantly, you can find the performance here:

[Food, Glorious Food - YouTube](#)

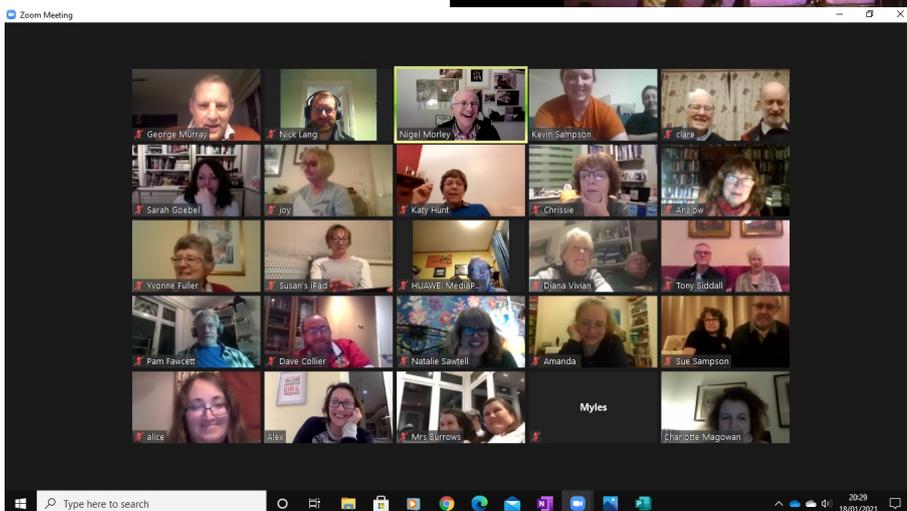
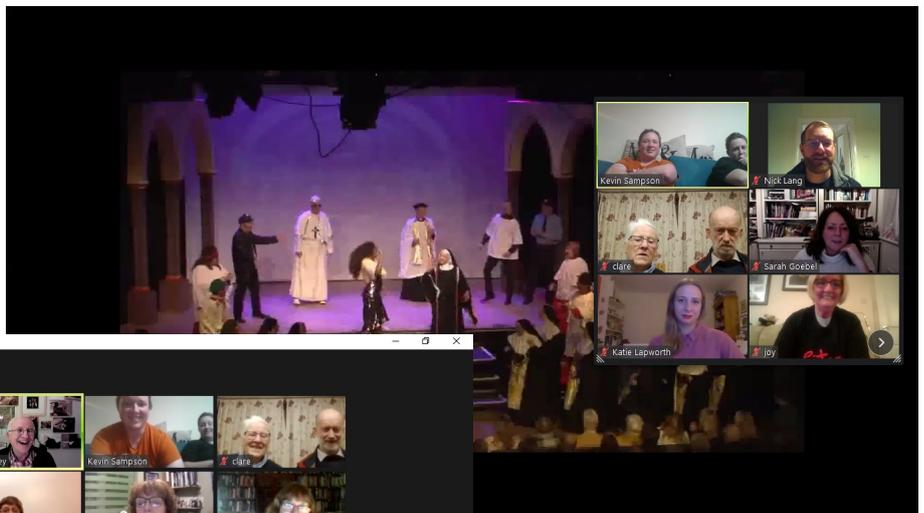


FAOS Socials go Online!

Over the last year meeting physically has been a nightmare, but we have managed a few online meets, prior to starting our rehearsals for *Love is in the (Open) Air*.



The first of these was our *Zoom-Along-a-Lockdown* evening on the 18th January. This involved singing along to songs from a number of our recent shows, including *Oliver!*, *The Pirates of*



Penzance, *Spamalot*, *Fiddler*, *Titanic* and *Sister Act*, where we shared in happy memories and maybe even sang along in the privacy of our own homes (muted, of course!).

We also held a *Video Night* in honour of Phil Street on the 10th February, where we enjoyed FAOS's 2002 production of *Oklahoma!* with Phil's massively memorable performance of Jud Fry and then shared some of the multitude of memories Phil left us with.

Lastly, there was even a hotly contested online *Quiz Night* on the 20th March. Many thanks to Martin Sampson, our Quizmaster!

QUIZ!

Thank you to all involved in bringing these events to fruition, helping to keep us together whilst we have been apart.



Love is in the Open Air

Strange what a walk in the woods with Nigel Morley in January can produce! Stranger still to see two women sitting on a log in the café at Frensham Little Pond excitedly singing the first lines of a variety of songs at each other! I think Heather and I could have devised a programme many times over!

Thus it slowly evolved, on the theme of Love, designed to get everybody singing again after a long and trying year. Hopefully there would be something for everyone as it was important to be totally inclusive and looking at the numbers who signed up for this, I think we achieved our aim. Thanks to Nigel for running the Zoom rehearsals. Personally I would be happy never to use Zoom again for music! I have fond (?) memories of running rehearsals in people's gardens with water running down the back of my neck after the baton prodded the roof of the gazebo but you all came up trumps and I know a lot of work was going on behind the scenes on some of the more complicated numbers. People I have spoken to really enjoyed the variety. It would be invidious to single out any particular item but I really enjoyed Jeremy Legat's Medley and I think other choirs would enjoy learning it as well.

We certainly met a few obstacles on the way – one really good rehearsal in Grayshott village hall followed by a switch in government policy – the generosity of people offering their gardens in not always clement weather and attempting to play my daughter's foreshortened keyboard with no pedal (she didn't even know that she had lent it!). Another memory I will treasure is of people leaping up and down to activate the Yates's outside light. I feel we may have missed a trick by not taking a donation bucket round to the neighbours!

They say that devising and rehearsing a concert takes far more effort than working on a musical show and I am here to tell you they are right! However with the Team effort for which Farnham is always noted, I think we did a pretty good job. Onwards and upwards to boldly go where no man has gone before – make it so!

Diana Vivian, MD



Farnham Herald



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Thursday, 15th July, 2021

Price 80p



A large crowd was treated to two hours of music from over a century of classic musicals in Gostrey Meadow last Sunday – read more on Page 5



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The show goes on in town meadow

AUDIENCES at Farnham Town Council's hugely-popular *Music in the Meadow* series of free Sunday concerts were treated to slightly different fare last weekend.

On the programme were composers like Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd-Webber.

The set list included songs

from musicals such as *The Little Mermaid*, *Gigi*, *The Greatest Showman* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

The event was presented by FAOS Musical Theatre Group, its first outdoor concert in living memory.

FAOS usually performs in the Maltings' Great Hall where it can be found twice a year, staging large-scale musicals

like *Sister Act*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Spamalot*.

But following 18 months of enforced silence, the group was determined to get singing as soon as possible, and a socially-distanced outdoor event was the way to do it.

A very large crowd assembled in Gostrey Meadow where, seated in separate bubbles, they were treated to two hours of music from more than a century of classic musicals.

The centrepiece was a costumed, semi-staged performance of Gilbert & Sullivan's miniature operetta *Trial By Jury*.

The entire programme was repeated in the Maltings' outdoor public space on Tuesday evening with a Moroccan barbecue.

FAOS's next presentation will be in January next year when they will stage Gilbert & Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*. Details at www.faos.org.uk

This Sunday's Gostrey Meadow performers are the Missy Nelson Band (folk).



Love is in the (Open) Air

NB: Recordings of the songs can be accessed [here](#) or type in tinyurl.com/zjz4r4yd

Love is in the Air - John Paul Young



Crazy Little Thing Called Love - Queen



Kiss the Girl
Menken & Ashman
(The Little Mermaid)

I Feel Pretty
Leonard Bernstein
(West Side Story)



A Million Dreams - Pasek & Paul
(The Greatest Showman)



Medley - The One With Cole, Jerome, Irving & George, arranged by Jeremy Legat

With You on my Arm
Jerry Herman
(La Cage aux Folles)



Love is an Open Door
Robert & Lopez (Frozen)



Always the Bridesmaid
Collins & Leigh
(I Love You You're Perfect)



Beauty and the Beast
Ashman & Menkin
(Beauty and the Beast)



Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love - Cole Porter (Paris), You're the One That I Want - John Farrar (Grease)



How Could You Believe Me
When I Said I Loved You?
Lane & Lerner
(Royal Wedding)

Getting Married Today
Sondheim
(Company)

Trial by Jury - Gilbert & Sullivan



Makin' Whoopee
Donaldson & Kahn

Uncoupled
Lloyd Webber & Stilgoe
(Starlight Express)



And This is My Beloved
Wright & Forrest
(Kismet)

A Quiet Thing
Ebb & Kander
(Flora The Red Menace)

Ah Yes, I Remember It Well
Lerner & Loewe
(Gigi)



Seasons of Love – Larson (Rent)

Rest in peace: Phil Street

It was with great sadness that I notified the Group in January of the passing of former chairman and FAOS legend, Phil Street.

Phil joined FAOS in 2002 for their production of *Oklahoma!*, however this was not Phil's first foray into the world of musical theatre. Phil's mesmerising portrayal of the farmhand Judd Fry is still spoken about to this day, as was testament to the quality of Phil's acting skills. When reminiscing on good times, Phil revealed to me that in order to really get into the character, for the week preceding the show, he only washed his hair with water, just so it would look greasy and give Judd that even darker image.



Phil wore many hats within FAOS, from on stage actor, to Stage Crew, to Front of House manager, to Chairman. There is very little Phil has not done to help the Group in some way or form (pictured here during the 'get out' of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, 2006).

FAOS was obviously Phil's hobby, but his real life job was a true reflection of the man he was. Phil was a criminal law solicitor and a damned good one at that! Phil joined forces with Fiona Taylor of Taylors Solicitors to form Taylor Street Solicitors in October 1996. Phil continued to grow the business and even when other firms were crumbling, Phil stepped in to save the jobs of several local solicitors and make the business into the largest criminal law firm in the South of England.

A sign of the man he was, Phil persuaded a custody sergeant that a heroin addict was ready to change. He put some trust and belief into the man. Despite dozens of convictions, it was agreed that "just this once" he would be released as a "free man". Fast forward 5 years and Phil met him again. That decision changed the man's life. Young family, a business and employing others. None of this would have been possible without Phil's intervention and forethought.

I remember a close family member needing legal support. I rang Phil for a quote. Phil being Phil refused to accept my money and sent his number one solicitor for the particular area of law required.

Phil worked hard, but he played harder. Phil loved going to the rugby and the darts. In fact, some of the greatest photos I've seen of Phil have been at the darts.

Phil was not only a member of FAOS, but also of many other local groups. He could often found on a local stage, leading the way. Phil was so good, that he performed in the Wintershall outdoor performances; both the Nativity and the Passion. He would often play the narrator and his booming voice and persona could be heard, not only in Wintershall, but in Trafalgar Square also (pictured). There has never been a greater sight than seeing Phil standing in Trafalgar Square addressing an audience of thousands!



Rest in peace: Phil Street continued



There was one thing more important to Phil than anything else and that was his son, Oliver. Oliver was born in 2008 and Phil could not have been happier. There was always a beam on Phil's face whenever the topic turned to him. Phil was always proud of his achievements and was particularly pleased that Oliver excelled in two of Phil's favourite subjects; sports and music.

Phil would always go that extra mile to make sure everyone else was ok. Even when he was ill, he would always turn the topic of conversation to how YOU were doing, rather than talk about himself. There was nothing

too onerous for him. If you needed an extra stage hand, he was there. If you needed someone to move something, he was there. If you needed emergency storage, he sorted it. There was nothing he refused to do to help the Group or its members.

It is for this reason that, during the 2021 AGM, I will be introducing a new award – The Phil Street award, for someone that has gone above and beyond in the name of FAOS Musical Theatre Group. This will be an annual award for which the recipient will be decided upon by the chairperson of the group at the AGM.

As the Covid restrictions are lifting, the chair people of the Groups Phil was involved with will be arranging a get-together in honour of Phil. I will of course update you all when a date and venue has been agreed upon.

Until then, there is only one thing left to say: Proper Job, Phil!

Kevin Sampson

Rest in peace: Chris Burchett

It is with deep personal sadness that I report the passing of former member Chris Burchett on 15/12/2020.

Although arguably better known for his cricketing prowess, (he played opening batsman for Farnham for many years), Chris also made an impact on various stages in the area. He first joined and performed for Alton Operatic & Dramatic Society before also performing for FAOS, now FAOS MTG, and also did a show for Farnborough now Cody. His stage appearances for Farnham were

a memorable Sergeant of Police in *The Pirates of Penzance* 1980, chorus in the *G&S story* 1982 and other notable performances were: Sir Roderick in *Ruddigore* 1984 and the Bosun in *HMS Pinafore* 1985. Moving away from G&S Chris played the stage doorman in *Kiss me Kate* 1986 and the same year saw him as the Tramp in *Salad Days*. His last role for us was as Big Ben in *Merrie England* 1987 a role which suited him well. Chris was a cool performer and took all things in his stride. He will be missed by all of us who shared a stage and friendship with him.

Many thanks to Brian Cockell, whose book enabled me to piece together CB's FAOS FMTG cv.

Geoff Vivian



Rest in peace: Brian Tonge

In August 2020 FAOS lost a performer, past committee member and highly valued friend. Brian Tonge died at home after a short illness. He had sung onstage with FAOS for over a decade and in later years was the mainstay of its barbershop quartet.

Brian was known by everyone as a perfect gentleman and someone whose friendship made you feel somehow honoured. But he was also modest and unassuming and the first to praise others. People who knew him well describe him as a lovely man - highly respected, witty, hugely talented, very musical, honest and full of integrity.

Born on the Wirral in 1931, he sang in the church choir, began an electrician's apprenticeship, ran away to sea to sail the world with the merchant navy, and managed his own electrical components company. And then, some time in the 1990s, he fetched up at Frensham Cricket Club where he was the musical director for their annual pantomimes, while FAOS's long-serving Alan Stevens directed alongside him.

A sideways move into FAOS saw him perform in the chorus of dozens of productions. Our President, Alan Wilde, comments that 'Brian did, occasionally, have words to say, usually in a comic role, and he always took his participation seriously, learnt his words diligently, brought a fine voice to the men's chorus, and was always in the right position on stage (which is not what can always be said of some of us!). And, of course, he was delightful company in the dressing room.

'Brian was always amongst the first offer to contribute to the get-in and get-out, scenery-painting or other preparation, and he made a real contribution to committee work, where his common sense and courtesy around stage-struck egos earned him huge respect.

'He was Chairman of the Show Selection Committee for a time. He produced a huge amount of material and useful information after thoroughly researching possible shows, and would then make balanced and reasoned presentations at an AGMs. He managed to get the performance licence for Jesus Christ Superstar from under the noses of other groups just before it was taken out of circulation for a professional run. It was never clear how he did it but folklore whispers of a journey to Denmark Street in London.'



Brian was unmissable because of his height and, at six feet eight inches, there was never any question of his hiding in the back row of the chorus. And he was a contemporary of another performer who was no slouch in the height department – Mike Cubitt. Mike remembers that Doreen Wilde, who directed FAOS productions over several decades, referred to the two of them as her bookends: she really had no option but to place them at either end of the line.

The last musical Brian sang in was the 2008 production of My Fair Lady the same year that he collaborated with Nigel Morley, Nick Lang and Kevin Sampson to form the a cappella quartet Something for the Weekend. Although he had sung second tenor when he joined FAOS, he uncomplainingly filled the new quartet's vacancy for a bass man.



Rest in peace: Brian Tonge continued



It is notable to recall that Brian was not at all a young man when the quartet formed. For most people, memorising new material after a certain age becomes increasingly troublesome. Brian was not 'most people'. In his mid-eighties, after ten years and 60 performances with the quartet, he had committed to memory 40 songs, all of whose arrangements were new to him. It's important to point out that he was always the only person singing his part – unlike in a choir, there were no other bass singers he could rely on for support and no instrumental accompaniment. Every song was

effectively a solo performance.

Brian was that genteel rock of a singer whose bass line underpinned almost every one of the quartet's songs. When, from time to time, he used to emerge from his anchorage at the rear of the formation, audiences would fall about as he drew himself to his full height to interject a wry, twinkly phrase, his face shining with the pleasure of stepping to centre stage for a moment. In songs where the tune was his to sing, such as *The Sloth* and *Let's Face the Music*, Brian epitomised the Dean Martin style of lounge singer, his jacket slung over one shoulder, cheekily suggestive of a louche past. There were moments of pure brilliance such as when, during *The Beach Boys' Barb'ra Ann*, he would break through the rolling east coast rhythm to intone "Ba ba ba, ba Barb'ra Ann" in the accent of a slightly surprised-looking Bertie Wooster.



He had a lovely, gentle sense of humour. So gentle that you didn't always spot when he was teasing you. On occasion, when the topic of conversation was, say, about a dark drama on TV, he would quietly comment 'My psychiatrist has told me not to watch things with a sad ending'. This insight into an apparently troubled aspect of his life was moving to anyone who heard it. It was only a few months before he died that his wife, Gill, much entertained by people's gullibility, revealed that Brian had never in his life seen a psychiatrist.

Brian's life was celebrated at the Aldershot Crematorium by Gill, their three children, their granddaughter and a few close friends. Frustratingly, the Covid-19 regulations were severely restricting how many people could attend funerals; it was sad that, for a man who loved to perform, his final audience comprised only a handful of the dozens who would have wanted to be there.

To view a two-minute video celebration of Brian's musicianship, please [click here](https://tinyurl.com/36a4j8s2) or type the following into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/36a4j8s2>

Nigel Morley



Proposing a toast to FAOS!

Speaking personally, being a member of 'The Society' has kept me going through thick and thin in the past thirty years and I know many members could probably say the same. It has been such a horrendous year in all sorts of ways for many of us regardless of the pandemic as well as because of the pandemic, whether we are young or old or somewhere in the middle.

The delight on a very aged FAOS member's face when I arrived to do her vaccines and give her the opportunity for a chat with someone as she was finding it so lonely being in the flat and not being able to get out at all through the long winter months was very cheering for me. I made sure the second time I visited that she was last on my list so we had time for a good old blether and talk about people she remembered in the society when she was younger as well as a little gossip and catch up of more recent friends.

When we are all buzzing about in our various walks of life we sometimes forget just how important that Monday or Wednesday night rehearsal can be for a variety reasons.

I would like everyone to raise their glasses therefore and the toast is Friendship... let's drink to friendships made, friendships lost, friendships forgotten and friendships still to come. CHEERS!



Katy Hunt

Give us your stuff!!

We are on a mission to help you declutter and get rid of unwanted stuff. That's the kind of group we are at FAOS – always wanting to help out! Anything you get rid of in our direction we will sell on our bric-à-brac stall at **Rowledge Village Fayre on Monday 30 August.**

Please donate any unwanted:

- ◆ jewellery
- ◆ clothes
- ◆ soft toys
- ◆ other toys
- ◆ toiletries
- ◆ handbags
- ◆ bric-à-brac

all in good condition (please – no food, drinks, books or furniture).

To donate: please email nigelmorley1@btinternet.com to arrange collection or drop-off.

Congratulations Martin!

Congratulations to Martin Sampson on once again becoming a Surrey County Finalist in Lawn Bowls. His team were runners up this year, but they will go on to represent Surrey at the National finals later this month! Well done!!

